

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 875

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

SECDEF WASHDC

CHIEF OF STAFF AIR FORCE

S E C R E T BANGKOK 18737

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, TH

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH DEFENSE MINISTER: READINESS
OF THAI ARMED FORCES

1. ABASSADOR CALLED ON DEFENSE MINISTER AND DEPUTY PRIME
MINISTER PRAMAN ADIREKSAN SEPTEMBER 3
AT AMBASSADOR'S REQUEST, ACCOMPANIED BY COMUSMACHTAI
GENERAL BUNRIT THANTRANON, WAS PRESENT. MAIN PURPOSE
WAS TO DISCUSS FUTURE OF THAI-AM AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE
AND REPAIR FACILITY AT UDORN (SEPTTEL). GENERAL
PROBLEM OF STATE OF READINESS OF THAI ARMED FORCES
WAS ALSO DISCUSSED.

2. PRAMAN INITIATED GENERAL DISCUSSION BY EXPRESSING
CONCERN OVER LACK OF PREPAREDNESS OF THAI ARMED FORCES
TO COPE WITH THAILAND'S NEW SECURITY PROBLEMS. HE
ASSERTED THAT AFTER MORE THAN 20 YEARS OF U.S.
MILITARY ASSISTANCE, THAILAND WAS INCAPABLE OF
PROVIDING ITS OWN DEFENSE AND LACKED DEFENSE
PRODUCTION CAPABILITIES. HE WORRIED OVER CONDITION
OF RTAF, CLAIMING THAT IT CONSISTED OF OBSOLETE
AND NON-SUPPORTABLE AIRCRAFT. HE REFERRED TO
THAILAND'S LONG-STANDING DESIRE TO BE GIVEN ADDI-
TIONAL OV-10 AIRCRAFT BY THE U.S., AND IN THE AREA
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OF AIR DEFENSE, COMPLAINED THAT THE U.S. HAD FAILED

TO PROVIDE HAWK MISSILES AS PROMISED.

3. THE AMBASSADOR IN REPLY NOTED THAT PRAMAN'S COMMENTS IMPLIED THAT THE MAIN THREAT TO THAILAND WAS A LARGE-SCALE CONVENTIONAL ATTACK AGAINST THE BORDER, WHILE IT WAS GENERALLY THOUGHT THAT THE MAIN THREAT WAS A POSSIBLE STEPPED-UP INSURGENCY WITHIN THAILAND. HE ASKED GENERAL ADERHOLT TO COMMENT FURTHER.

4. SECONDING THE AMBASSADOR'S POINT, COMUSMACTHAI BEGAN BY POINTING OUT THAT ALMOST ALL OF THE AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS IN THE RTAF WOULD BE FULLY SUPPORTABLE UNTIL AT LEAST 1980. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE KIND OF AIRCRAFT NOW POSSESSED BY RTAF WERE THE MOST EFFICIENT AND ECONOMICAL SYSTEMS NEEDED TO DEAL WITH THE PRINCIPAL THREAT, INSURGENCY. THE CONDITION OF THE AIRCRAFT, MOREOVER, WAS EXCELLENT AND THEIR RATE OF OPERATIONAL READINESS WAS HIGH, OV-10'S, THESE REMAINED IN THE U.S. INVENTORY AND THEREFORE COULD NOT BE MADE AVAILABLE TO THAILAND. COMUSMACTHAI ALSO REVIEWED FOR THE MINISTER THE MAP-SUPPORTED SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROJECTS ALREADY EXTANT IN THAILAND, AND LAMENTED THAT THE THAI WERE NOT MAKING FULL USE OF THEM.

5. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT TWO WEEKS EARLIER, FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI HAD GIVEN HIM A LIST OF AIRCRAFT WANTED BY THE RTAF. HE HAD ANALYZED THE WAS PLEASED TO INFORM MINISTER PRAMAN THAT, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE OV-10'S, THE U.S. WAS ABLE TO FULFILL OR MORE THAN FULFILL ALMOST ALL OF THE REQUESTS CONTAINED IN THE LIST. SOME OF THE WANTED AIRCRAFT HAD ALREADY BEEN TURNED OVER TO THE RTG OUT OF ASSETS RECOVERED FROM VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA, AND THE U.S. WAS NOW IN THE PROCESS OF TURNING OVER TO THE RTG ADDITIONAL EX-CAMBODIA/VN AIRCRAFT. THE AMBASSADOR LEFT WITH THE MINISTER A PAPER ANALYZING CHATCHAI'S SHOPPING LIST AND WHAT THE U.S. HAD DONE IN RESPONSE.

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6. THE CONVERSATION CLEARLY CONFIRMED OUR GROWING IMPRESSION THAT THE UPPER LEVELS OF THE RTG ARE DEEPLY PREOCCUPIED WITH IMPROVING THEIR DEFENSE POSTURE IN THE FACE OF THEIR NEW SECURITY CIRCUMSTANCES. THE CONVERSATION MIGHT HAVE BEEN USEFUL IN DISPELLING SOME OF PRAMAN'S MISCONCEPTIONS AS TO WHAT IS NEEDED.

WHITEHOUSE

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